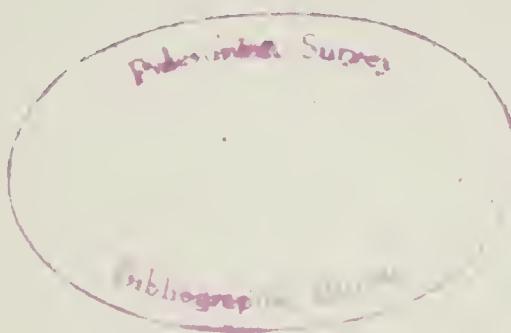


Jews

# ZIONISM AND PATRIOTISM



BY  
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## ZIONISM AND PATRIOTISM.

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During most of my life my contact with Jews and Judaism was slight, and I gave little thought to their problems save by asking myself from time to time whether we were showing by our lives due appreciation of the opportunities which this hospitable country affords. My approach to Zionism was through Americanism. Practical experience and observation convinced me that to be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews we must be Zionists.

Lest there be misunderstanding, let me state at the outset what Zionism is and what it is not.

It is not a movement to remove all the Jews of the world compulsorily to Palestine. In the first place there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more than one-fifth of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel anyone to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jew more, not less freedom,—it aims to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world: to live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; a right which members of small nations as well as of large,—which Irish, Greek, Bulgarian, Servian, or Belgian, may now exercise as fully as Germans or English.

Furthermore, Zionism is not a movement to wrest from the Ottoman the sovereignty of Palestine. Palestine merely seeks to establish in Palestine, as part of the Turkish Empire, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life; where they may expect ultimately to constitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule.

Since the destruction of the Temple, nearly two thousand years ago, the longing for Palestine has been ever present with the Jew. It was the hope of a return to the land of his fathers that buoyed up the Jew amidst persecution, and for the realization of which the devout ever prayed. Until a generation ago this was a hope merely—a wish piously prayed for but not worked for. The Zionist movement is idealistic, but essentially practical. It seeks to realize that hope; to make the dream of a Jewish life in a Jewish land come true as other great dreams of the world have been realized—by men working with devotion, intelligence, and self-sacrifice. It was thus the dream of Italian independence and unity, after centuries of vain hope, came true through the efforts of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour; that the dream of home rule in Ireland has just been realized; that the dream of Greek, of Bulgarian and of Servian independence became facts.

The rebirth of the Jewish nation is no longer a mere dream. It is in process of accomplishment in a most practical way; and the story is a most wonderful one. A generation ago a few Jewish emigrants from Russia and from Roumania, instead of proceeding Westward to this hospitable country where they might easily have secured material prosperity, turned Eastward for the purpose of settling in the land of their fathers. They came from countries where the Jews were persecuted and subjected to the gravest injustice; but the desire to avoid persecution and injustice was not the main cause of their settling in Palestine. Some of them were devoutly orthodox; but religious devotion was not the main cause of their settling in Palestine. They went to Palestine because they were convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine was a fact of deepest significance; that it was a manifestation in the struggle for existence by an ancient people which had established its right to live—a people whose three thousand years of civilization had produced a faith, culture, and individuality which enable them to contribute largely in the future, as they had in the past, to the advance of civilization; and that it was not a right view, that it was not a right merely, but a duty of the Jewish nation to survive and develop.

These new Pilgrim Fathers sought, therefore, to restore in the land of their fathers the Jewish national life. They believed that there only could Jewish life to be protected from the forces of disintegration; that there alone could the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wished to settle in Palestine the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews would be benefited and that the long perplexing Jewish problem would at last, find solution.

To the worldly wise these efforts at colonization appeared very foolish. Nature and man presented obstacles in Palestine which appeared to them insuperable; the colonists were in fact ill-equipped for their task, save in their spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. The land, harassed by centuries of misrule, was treeless and apparently sterile; and it was infested with malaria. The Government offered them no security, either as to life or property. The colonists themselves were not only unfamiliar with the character of the country, but were ignorant of the farmer's life which they proposed to lead; for the Jews of Russia and Roumania had been generally denied the opportunity of owning or working land. Furthermore, these colonists were not inured to the physical hardships to which the life of a pioneer is necessarily subjected. To these hardships and to malaria the men succumbed. Those who survived were long confronted with failure. But at last success came. Within a generation these Jewish Pilgrim Fathers, and those who followed them, had succeeded in establishing these two fundamental propositions:

*First.*—That Palestine is fit for the modern Jew.

*Second.*—That the modern Jew is fit for Palestine.

This land, then treeless and supposed to be sterile and hopelessly arid, has been shown to have been treeless and sterile only because of man's misrule. It has been shown to be capable of becoming again a land "flowing with milk and honey." Oranges and grapes, olives and almonds, wheat and other cereals are now growing there in profusion. Those who undertake to describe Palestine are apt to speak of it as a miniature California, in its climate, its topography and its agricultural possibilities. Others have compared it with Sicily—long the granary of Rome.

Much patience and perseverance and faith have been required to develop these possibilities in Palestine; and very much remains to be done to make the life of the Jewish settler what it should be. But the commercial test has been made. The progress is obvious to every traveller; and it may already be measured in statistics. In a single generation the export of oranges increased from 60,000 boxes to 1,500,000 and in recent years the groves have been so largely extended that exports to twice this amount are expected within a few years when these trees shall begin to bear fruit. The grape, the almond and the olive culture have prospered likewise, and there are important exports of wheat and other cereals.

This material development has been attended by a spiritual and social development no less extraordinary; a development in education, in health and in social order; and in the character and habits of the population. Perhaps the most extraordinary achievement of Jewish nationalism is the revival of the Hebrew Language, which has again become a language of the common intercourse of men. The Hebrew tongue, called a dead language for nearly two thousand years, has, in the Jewish colonies and in Jerusalem, become again the living mother-tongue. The effect of this common language in unifying the Jews is, of course, great; for the Jews of Palestine came literally from all the lands of the earth, each speaking, except for the use of Yiddish, the language of the country from which he came, and remaining, in the main, almost a stranger to the others.

But the effect of the renaissance of the Hebrew tongue is far greater than that of unifying the Jews. It is a potent factor in reviving the essentially Jewish spirit. It was a bold dream to plan the foundation of a new Jewish nation in Palestine by giving a common language to the natives of so many lands, particularly so when it is remembered that the language, long called *ácad*, had not only to be introduced, but to be adapted to modern use. Yet this has actually been accomplished in a single generation; and the man who took the first practical step, Eliezer Ben Jehuda—is still in Jerusalem, engaged in furthering the work.

Ben Jehuda's story will have a place in history. In 1880, living comfortably in Paris, he wrote an article for a Jerusalem paper, demanding that Hebrew become the language of intercourse in the Talmud Torahs and Yeshibahs of Palestine. The editor of the paper in which the article was published spoke of the propositions as "a pious wish;" but Ben Jehuda was not content that it should remain a

wish. He proposed that the wish become a fact, so he went to Palestine himself. He concluded that if Hebrew was to become a spoken language, the way to begin with Hebrew, as with charity, was at home. He said he would marry no woman who did not speak Hebrew fluently. Fortunately, he found one who could; and Hebrew became the language of his own household. Then he declared that he would deal only with those who could speak Hebrew. He was naturally regarded as half-crazy. But soon others followed his example!

And before a generation had passed, Hebrew became the language of kindergartens, of primary schools and of higher institutions of learning. Daily papers and magazines are now published, public lectures are delivered and plays performed in Hebrew. Many were the parents who learned Hebrew from their children! and there are instances also of non-Jews learning Hebrew in order to avail themselves of the advantages offered by the Hebrew educational and cultural institutions.

It was no ordinary sense of piety that made Ben Jehuda seek to introduce the Hebrew language. He recognized what the leaders of other peoples, seeking re-birth and independence, have recognized: that it is through the national language expressing the people's soul that the national spirit is aroused and the national power restored. In spite of the prevalence of the English tongue in Ireland, the revival of Gaelic was one of the most important factors in the movement which has just resulted in securing for the Irish their long-coveted home rule. The revival of Flemish was a potent factor in the re-birth of the Belgian people, who have now given such good account of themselves. And so it was with the revival of Greek, of Bulgarian and of Servian.

The intensity of conviction and the devotion which the revival of Hebrew has developed was shown in the struggle for its maintenance last year (1914) in the Palestinian schools. Believing that an effort was being made to supersede it in some of the schools, practically every teacher—two hundred in all—struck, giving up their only means of livelihood rather than submit to the impairment of the position of the Hebrew language. Pupils followed teachers, and parents aided by others in the community willingly faced, despite their poverty, the burden of establishing new national schools, so that their new-old national language might predominate. This is stuff out of which nations can be built!

The burden has fallen upon America to maintain the Zionist movement, now so promising after years of travail. The organization which has hitherto directed the movement had its headquarters in Berlin. The governing committee is composed mainly of citizens of the different nations now at war with one another. Some of the members are from Russia, some from Germany, some from Austria. The president of the Zionist congress was a German; and the leading financial institutions through which the business of the organization was conducted, were organized under British law. The war has scattered these officers under conditions which prevent their cooperating

or, indeed, communicating freely with one another; and which prevents them from directing affairs in Palestine. The establishment in a neutral country of a provisional committee to take up the work thus became necessary; and such a committee was naturally established in America, the only neutral country which has a large Jewish population, and where more than one-fifth of all the Jews in the world live. The committee so formed has at the outset the task of providing funds necessary for maintaining the Zionist organization and institutions.

Hitherto ninety percent of all the money required for this purpose was raised in Europe. The European Jews are now prevented from contributing practically anything. Upon us falls the obligation and the privilege of providing the needed funds. When we consider how large and generous has been the contribution of the Irish in America for the cause of home rule—the present demand upon the Jews for this purpose seems very small indeed.

The Jews in America can be relied upon to perform fully their obligation. And there are special reasons why we should be eager to do so; for Palestine gives promise of doing for us far more than we can ever be called upon to do for Palestine; for the Jewish renaissance in Palestine will enable us to perform our plain duty to America. It will help us to make toward the attainment of the American ideals of democracy and social justice that large contribution for which religion and life have peculiarly fitted the Jew.

America's fundamental law seeks to make real the brotherhood of man. That brotherhood became the Jewish fundamental law more than twenty-five hundred years ago. America's insistent demand in the twentieth century is for social justice. That also has been the Jews' striving for ages. Their affliction as well as their religion has prepared the Jews for effective democracy. Persecution broadened their sympathies; it trained them in patient endurance, in self-control, and in sacrifice. It made them think as well as suffer. It deepened the passion for righteousness.

The Jewish spirit, the product of their religion and experiences, is essentially modern and essentially American. Not since the destruction of the Temple have the Jews in spirit and in ideals been, in these respects, so fully in harmony with the noblest aspirations of the country in which they lived. The Jewish spirit, so long preserved, the character developed by so many centuries of sacrifice, should be preserved and developed further, so that in America as elsewhere the sons of the race may in future live lives and do deeds worthy of their ancestors.

But as the Ghetto walls are falling Jewish life cannot be preserved and developed, assimilation cannot be averted, unless there be re-established in the fatherland a centre, from which the Jewish spirit may radiate, and give to the Jews scattered throughout the world that inspiration which springs from memories of a great past and the hope of a great future. To accomplish this, it is not necessary that the Jewish population of Palestine be large as compared with the whole

number of Jews in the world. Throughout centuries when the Jewish influence was greatest, during the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman Empires, only a relatively small part of the Jews lived in Palestine; and only a small part of the Jews returned from Babylon when the Temple was rebuilt.

But we have also an immediate and more pressing duty in the performance of which Zionism alone seems capable of affording effective aid. We must protect America and ourselves from demoralisation which has to some extent already set in among American Jews. Throughout all the years of persecution the general standard of morals was exceptionally high among the Jews. The Jewish criminal was very rare; for with the Jews laws were self-enforced and each individual was his own policeman. The Rosenthal case with its horrible revelations of violence and corruption, and the white slave persecutions, with their disclosures of prostitution among Jewish women, brought to the American Jew a deep sense of humiliation, and to the thoughtful grave concern. What could be more remote from Jewish tradition than such resorts to violence, unless it be the prevalence of unchastity?

The cause of this demoralisation is clear. It results in large part from the fact that in our land of liberty all the restraints of liberty and of law by which the Jews were protected in their Ghettos, had been removed and a new generation was left without necessary moral and spiritual support. And is it not equally clear what the only possible remedy is? It is the laborious task of inculcating self-respect,—a task which can be accomplished only by restoring the ties of the Jew to the noble past of his race, and by making him realize the possibilities of a no less glorious future. The only bulwark against demoralisation is to develop in each new generation of Jews in America the sense of "*Noblesse oblige.*" That spirit can be developed only with those who regard their race as destined to live and to live with a bright future. That spirit can best be developed by actively participating in some way in furthering the ideals of the Jewish renaissance, and this can be done effectively only through furthering the Zionist movement.

In the Jewish colonies of Palestine there are no Jewish criminals; because everyone, old and young alike, is led to feel the glory of his race and his obligation to carry forward its ideals. The new Palestinian Jewry produces instead of criminals, great scientists like Aaron Aaronsohn, the discoverer of wild wheat; great pedagogues like David Yellin; craftsmen like Boris Schatz, the founder of the Bezalel; intrepid Shomerim, the Jewish guards of peace, who stand watch in the night against marauders and doers of violent deeds.

Every Irish American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice be made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feel that neither he nor his descendants will ever be there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so.

There is one other consideration to which the Jews of America should give thought. Though the result of this war should be as we hope, the removal or lessening of the disabilities under which the Jews labour in Eastern Europe, nevertheless, when peace comes, emigration from the war-stricken countries will certainly proceed in large volume, because of the misery incident to the war's devastation. More than one-half of the Jews of the whole world live in that territory near the western frontier of Russia, which has become one of the two vast battlefields of the nations. Is it desirable that America should be practically the only country to which the Jews of Eastern Europe may emigrate? Is it not desirable that Palestine should give a special welcome to the Jews, as the Zionists propose?

I am impelled all the more to ask for your support, both moral and financial, because at this critical juncture we should all stand together, so that when the occasion arises, we may be of lasting service to our people. Now is not the time to foreshadow the policy which we should engage upon. But when the nations approach peace, the Jews of America, if united, may be factors in obtaining for the Jews of the other parts of the world something more real than promises of amelioration; something more lasting than philanthropy. And this greater undertaking depends upon the readiness with which you rally in every possible form to the cause.

Your loyalty to America, your loyalty to Judaism, should lead you to support the Zionist cause.

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